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England Church of

PLAIN

REASONS,

I. For Dissenting from the Communion of the *Church of England*.

II. Why *Dissenters* are not, nor can be guilty of *Schism*, in peaceably separating from the Places of Public Worship in the *Church of England*.

A N D

III. Several Common OBJECTIONS, brought by *Churchmen* against *Dissenters*, Answered.

By a True PROTESTANT.

THE THIRTEENTH EDITION.

Ye shall observe to do as the Lord your God commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, Deut. v. 32.

Now I praise you, Brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the Ordinances, as I delivered them to you, 1 Cor. xi. 2.

“ If two Churches differ one from another, a Man is
“ bound to join with that which appears most to re-
“ tain its Evangelical Purity.”

Dr. Stillingfleet's Iren.

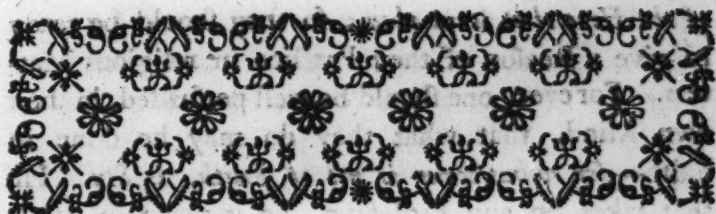
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REASON





PLAIN REASONS, &c.

✠✠✠✠✠**FORASMUCH** as some of the *Church*
✠✠✠✠✠ **F** of *England* lay on *Dissenters* the hea-
✠✠✠✠✠ vy Charge of *Schism*, and many of them
✠✠✠✠✠ know not how to clear themselves of
that Charge: The following Pages are designed,

1. To inform the more moderate of our Brethren in the *Church of England*, that we do not dissent from their Church out of Stubbornness, or because we love Contention, but from a tender Conscience, willing to keep the Ordinances as well as the Doctrines of Jesus Christ *pure and intire*; not daring to add to them, or diminish any thing from them, under any Pretence whatsoever.

2. To furnish well-meaning *Dissenters* with *plain Reasons* for their common Practice. For we would have none go on blindfold in Christianity, or take up a Profession among *Dissenters* because their Fathers went before them in that Way, as if it were a Crime to step out of their Path. But we believe,

that, as every one ought to be ready to give a Reason of the Hope that is in them; so they should be ready to give a Reason of their Practice in religious Matters. For every one should be well persuaded, in their own Mind, that what they do may be done in Faith—for whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin. He that takes up any Profession, be it never so good, only from Education, without examining it in every part, is never like to be a useful, if ever he be a true Christian.



PART I.

Containing Ten REASONS for dissenting from the Church.

REASON I.

WE dissent from the *Church of England*, because we do not look upon it to be so pure a Church as some others are.

If any, by the *Church of England*, do understand the whole Nation, we declare we know no such Church. But if any take the *Church of England* for particular Parish-Assemblies or Congregations, then we do not say but some of them may be true Churches, though they may be defective in Doctrine and Discipline; (for a Man that hath lost his Hands to work, and his Feet to walk, and his Eyes to see,

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is a true Man, though defective); and yet we think we have sufficient Warrant for our Practice in dissenting from them. For we do for our Souls, as they and we do for our Bodies. If we are sick, we chuse out a skilful Physician; lest he kills instead of curing us. When we want Food, we take care to buy that which is wholesome, such as will nourish us. If we remove our Habitation, we chuse out a good wholesome Air; not an unhealthy, sickly Place. If we change our Servants, we seek others that are skilful, faithful and diligent; not such as are either ignorant of their Work, or lazy in it; or such as care for nothing but their Wages: Then can any blame us, if we take as much care of our Souls, which are of more Value? When many speak of the *Church of England*, they think of nothing else but the Place of divine Worship; and they are strengthened in this Error by the industrious Priestcraft of designing Men: For they know that the *Greek Word*, so often used for Church [in the *New-Testament*] always signifies the *People met together*, not the Place where they meet, *Acts* xiv. 27. *1 Cor.* xiv. 23. But their Design herein, is to make the unthinking People believe, that if they leave that Place, they leave the Church of God.

But the Place of Worship [called the *Church*]

1. Cannot be the Church which Christ purchased with his own Blood, and which Ministers are charged to feed, *Acts* xx. 28.

2. It cannot be the Church that brought the Apostle on in his Way, *Acts* xv. 3.

3. It cannot be the Church in an House, 1 *Cor.* xvi. 19.

4. It cannot be the Church that was to be spoken to, and that was to speak to others, *Matt.* xviii. 17.

5. It cannot be that Church, which is said to be *the Body of Christ*, and of which *Jesus Christ* was the Head, *Col.* i. 24.

2. *What then is the Church?*

A. "The visible Church is a Congregation of faithful Men met together to worship God, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministred, according to *Christ's* Ordinance, in all those things that of Necessity are requisite to the same."

(This is the 19th Article of the *Church of England*). Wherein observe,

1. The visible Church is a Congregation; therefore not a whole Nation. For when did the *Church of England* (so considered) meet together in one Congregation? By their own Words, the visible Church must be no more than can meet together to worship God in one Place, otherwise 'tis not a Congregation.

2. The Article saith, it "is a Congregation of faithful Men;" (*i. e.* of Believers in *Christ*). The Clergy know, whether, in this matter, they act according to their Articles, in admitting none to their Communion but the Faithful; or whether saying the Creed will not do. For some that have been ten Years Communicants in the *Church of England* have declared, "that they knew not what Faith in
" *Christ*

" *Christ* meant; and that their Minister never asked them a Word about it; but only told them, that they should have so much Money each time they came there."

3. It is a Congregation "where the *pure Word of God is preached.*" Here the Article affirms, That what they preach, must be *the pure Word of God.* Not an Oration of the excellent Constitution of their Church, or of passive Obedience, or an Exclamation against Schism, or a Discourse of Morality, or only exclaiming against such Vices as the very Light of Nature condemns.

But to preach *the pure Word of God*, is to preach *Jesus Christ*, and Sinners Need of an Interest in him and of his justifying Righteousness, and to magnify the Riches of Divine Grace in Man's Salvation. It is to preach the Doctrines of *Faith, Repentance, Regeneration and Sanctification*, and the Necessity of the Power of the Spirit of God in order to all these. These are the Doctrines that *Dissenters* preach; and thus they preach most agreeable to *the pure Word of God*, and *the thirty-nine Articles of Religion.* Therefore, though we are called *Dissenters*, yet many, that keep in the *Church of England*, are *Dissenters* more than we. For we dissent only from *indifferent Things* (as they call them) but they dissent from their own Articles of Faith.

4. The Sacraments must "be duly administered according to Christ's Ordinance."

5. In the Administration of the Ordinances of Christ, there must be no unnecessary things imposed on Men. Of these two last after.

But

But, by the way, since the Article saith, *That the pure Word of God must be preached*, it must not be amis here, to take a little Notice of the common Preachers of the Word in the Churches.

Many Ministers of the *Church of England* are Men of great Learning and Parts; but it seems that the most of them have little enough, and yet have more than many of them make a good use of; you have their Picture drawn to the Life, and it would even afright a Christian to behold it, though drawn by a skilful Hand. Bishop Burnet *New Pref.* pag. 5, 6. [for whose Plainness in exposing their hateful and shameful Ignorance and Idleness, some of the Clergy curse him bitterly]. His Words are these :

“ Our *Ember-Weeks** are the Grief and Burden of
 “ my Life. The much greater Part of those who
 “ come to be *ordained*, are ignorant to a Degree not
 “ to be apprehended by those who are not obliged
 “ to know it. The easiest part of Knowledge, is
 “ that to which they are the greatest Strangers; I
 “ mean, the plainest Parts of the Scriptures, which
 “ they say, in excuse of this Ignorance, that their
 “ Tutors in the University never mentioned the Rea-
 “ ding of them : So that they can give no Account,
 “ or at least but a very imperfect one, of the Con-
 “ tents even of the Gospels. Those who have read
 “ some few Books, yet never seem to have read the
 “ Scriptures: Many cannot give a tolerable Account
 “ even of the Catechism itself, how short and plain
 soever.

* *When Preachers are ordained.*

“ soever. They cry, and think it a sad Disgrace to
 “ be denied Orders, though the Ignorance of some
 “ is such, that, in a well-regulated State of Things,
 “ they would appear not knowing enough to be ad-
 “ mitted to the holy Sacrament; this does often tear
 “ my Heart. The Case is not much better in many,
 “ who, having got into Orders, come for Institution,
 “ and cannot make it appear that they have read the
 “ Scriptures, or any one good Book, since they were
 “ ordained.” Thus far the Bishop.

We dare not trust our precious Souls with such
 Guides; for how can they shew us the Way of Sal-
 vation, who cannot tell what the Gospels contain?
 Instead of being Teachers of others, have need them-
 selves to be taught which be the first Principles of
 the Oracles of God. O shameful! not know their
 Catechism, nor what the Gospels contain! Have
 these been at the University, and made a great Noise
 of taking their Degree, and after this need to be sent
 back to their School-Dames? Well! for fear of Dis-
 grace, in being denied Orders, the Bishop saith, *they*
cry. O rare Hectors! Are those the Men that lead
 our Gentry, as well as the common People, by the
 Nose? It would be the Nation's Mercy, to have a
 due Sense of this Disease.—*If the Blind lead the Blind,*
both are like to fall into the Ditch. I think we may ap-
 ply that Complaint of God, by the Prophet, to these
 poor dark Souls: *His Watchmen are blind; they are ig-*
norant, they are Shepherds that cannot understand, Isa.
 lvi. 10, 11. Are these like to feed the People of God
 with Knowledge and Understanding? Surely God ne-
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ver sent these Men to preach, or else he hath sent them in sore Judgment to this Land.

Obj. *Our Tutors never bid us read the Scriptures.*

A. What Tutors are here! If there is so little Religion at the Fountain, no Wonder we have so little at the Streams. If their Tutors did not put them upon reading the Scriptures, if they had had any Love to the Word of God in their Hearts, they would not have been such Strangers to the Word of God. If they themselves have not made Food of the Word of God, they are not like to do much Good at Preaching, *Ezek. iii. 1. Son of Man, eat this Roll, and go speak to the House of Israel.*

But suppose these were all very learned Men, (which cannot be granted) yet they have little Need of it, provided they can read right: For all have their Prayers made for them, and many of them their Sermons too. Be sure that God disapproves of such a lazy Practice.—*I am against the Prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my Words every one from his Neighbour. Jer. xxiii. 30.*

We honour human Learning much; but we do not count him the best Minister that hath the greatest Stock of that; but the Man, who, with it, hath most Grace and spiritual Experience; who preaches Jesus Christ, and whose Ministry God most owns for the Conversion of Sinners, and building up Believers in their most holy Faith; and who himself lives a holy Life. We believe, that Ministers had better be defective in human Learning, than in the Grace of God; therefore, when we chuse a Pastor, we do not
en.

enquire, Who ordained him? Or, What Garments does he wear? But, what Doctrines does he preach? What Life does he live? And, Are there any Signs of God's sending him? Not, Does he preach in the Church, or in a Barn? But, Whether his Preaching be in Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power?

REASON II.

We dissent from the *Church of England*, because we cannot take the *Common-Prayer-Book* for our Rule of Worship.

1. Because it orders the reading of much of the *Apocrypha*, instead of the pure Word of God, wherein are many things very fabulous, and we think Untruths, Things that *administer Questions, rather than godly Edifying, which is in Faith.*

2. Because it appoints all Persons religiously to observe above an hundred and fifty Days in the Year as *Holy-Time*, besides all Sabbath-Days.

We count the Sabbath of the Lord honourable; we also religiously observe occasional Days of Prayer and Thanksgiving, but cannot bind ourselves religiously to observe what we have no divine Warrant for: But are rather forbid the touching of.—*But now, after that ye have known God, &c. how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly Elements, whereunto you desire again to be in Bondage? Ye observe Days and Months, and Times and Years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed on you Labour in vain.* Gal. iv. 9, 10, 11.

3. Because thereby are imposed on all Ministers Forms of Prayers. If it be granted (as we think there is no Reason) that our Lord Jesus Christ made

a Form of Prayer for his Disciples to be used Word for Word, without Alteration ; yet by what Rule do any Men do so for others, and then impose them upon them for their constant Use ?

We have a Promise of *the Spirit of Grace and of Supplications*, Zech. xii. 10. But no Promise of the Help of the Spirit, to any Man or Men to make Forms for others.

If some use them in Sincerity, and can bring God no better, I believe God will accept them ; but if we have a better Offering to bring, we must not offer that which cost us nothing.

If we tie up ourselves to Forms, how can we say with St. Paul, *We know not what we should pray for as we ought*, Rom. vii. 26. They that pray by a Book, know, to a Word, what they should pray for ? If they have their Book, Light, Sight, and Learning enough to read it, they never need to be at a Loss about the matter.

What if some Ministers need these Forms ? Let such Parsons use them that cannot do without them : But why must strong Men tie up their Legs, that they may use Stilts to ? This is *to neglect*, and not *to stir up the Gift of God that is in them*, 2 Tim. i. 6.

We never read, in all the Word of God, of any such Custom as praying by Book ; though we read of the Prayers of *Abraham, Jacob, Job, Moses, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elisha, Isaiab, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, Jonab, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah*, and of the Apostles.

Doth an hungry or starving Man want a Form before him to tell his Wants by ? We should question

tion whether that Beggar was not a Cheat, who could not tell his Case, without reading of it out of his Book. If the Churches took due Care to chuse able Ministers, this Grievance would be laid aside: Or if it were left *indifferent*, as indifferent Things should be, that *those might use them, that could not pray without them*; Men would, for Shame, take up another Practice. The Forms of Prayer, and Book of Homilies, were both composed to help the (poor Tools of) Priests, at our first coming off from Popery: For the Priests were so ignorant, that they could neither pray nor preach. But now, since in the Church, we have Men of more Learning and better Parts, why must they claim this *Benefit of the Clergy*? And why must the Homilies be laid aside, and not the Forms of Prayer?

We verily think, that those who have the Help of the Spirit of God to preach, have his Help also to pray; but if they want the Spirit of Grace and Supplication, they are not fit to preach.

Obj. 1. *That Promise of the Help of the Spirit of God in Prayer, is to raise our Affections, and to draw out Grace to its Exercise in Prayer.*

Ans^r. We allow it heartily; but that is not all, nor the principal Thing intended: For the Promise is concerning *the Matter*, as well as *the Manner*: The Apostle, (*Rom. viii. 26.*) speaking of God's fulfilling that Promise, *Zech. xii. 10.* doth not say, We know not *how* to pray, but *what* to pray for.

But, in tying up ourselves to Forms, we shut out the Work of the Spirit, as to the *Matter*; and, if we thus limit the Holy-one of *Israel*, how can we

promise ourselves his Help in the other? In short, this seems to us like offering with *strange Fire*, Lev. x. 1.

Obj. 2. *The Way of praying by Book, hath been of very long standing in the Church.*

Ans. But the Way that *Dissenters* take in Prayer, hath been used two thousand Years before ever there was any Book in the World, and very probable, many more Thousands before it became a Custom for Christians to pray by Book.

Obj. 3. *But when we address ourselves to God we should use the most decent Expressions.*

Ans. It is very true, we should worship with *Reverence and godly Fear*: But it is the Heart, not fine Words, or elegant Expressions, that God looks at; if the Heart be upright with God in Prayer, and if it be done in Faith, God can and will overlook an hundred Slips of the Tongue, and hear Prayer, though it be as *Hezekiah's*, Isa. xxxviii. 14. like *the Chattering of the Crane or a Swallow.*

Obj. 4. *Dissenters are liable to vent false Doctrines by their Way of praying.*

Ans. So may those that keep strictly to a Form; witness that daily Petition of the Church, "Remember not, Lord, the Offences of our Forefathers." What is truly intended in it, we do not dispute; but it looks like *praying for the Dead*. So does that Form favour of Error, in the Order for Baptism, that places Pardon of Sin in *Regeneration*, instead of *the Merits of Christ*. Of which, after.

Obj. 5. *Dissenters Prayers are often incoherent.*

Ans. So may Forms of Prayer be too. Take one Instance in their own Words:

" Al-

“ Almighty and everlasting God, who alone
 “ workest great Marvels, send down upon our Bi-
 “ shops and Curates, &c. thy Grace.” Must we
 say, That it would be a great Marvel, if God should
 send down his Grace on Bishops and Curates? Then
 where is the Coherence of that Prayer?

Obj. 6. *For want of a Form, Dissenters Prayers are
 sometimes very unintelligible, the People know not what
 they intend, by some of their Petitions.*

Ans. So may set Forms be too. Let their own
 Form be witness:

“ Those things, which for our Unworthiness, we
 “ dare not ask, and which, for our Blindness, we
 “ cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, &c.” with ma-
 ny others like it.

Obj. 7. *For want of a Form of Prayer, Dissenters are
 often guilty of many Tautologies. or Repetition of the
 same Thing.*

Ans. Not half so often as those that use a Form:
 For they use the same Petition, six, eight, ten or twen-
 ty times over; this seems to cross the Command,
*Matth. vi. 7. When thou prayest, use not vain Repe-
 titions, as the Heathen do: For they think that they shall
 be heard for their much speaking, 1 Kings xviii. 26.*

Obj. 8. *The Prayers of the Church were composed by
 wise and learned Men, that better knew the Work and
 Nature of Prayer than we do.*

Ans. How great, or wise, or learned the Compos-
 ers were, we matter not; for though they were A-
 postles, or Angels of God, if they bring us any
 Rules of Faith or Practice that have not the Stamp

of the *Wisdom* and *Authority* of *Jesus Christ* upon them; we cannot, we dare not receive them.

Neither was there any Need of these human Inventions, till the Spirit, Life and Power of Religion was gone from the *Romish* Church, and then this Device was brought into the Church to serve instead thereof: And we use to say, *A bad Shift is better than none*. But 'tis pity that the reformed Churches should dance after her Pipes.

REASON III.

We cannot join with the *Church of England* in their Order for Baptism.

1. We except against that human Ordinance, *signing with the Cross*.

It is ordered to be done, "in token that hereafter they shall not be ashamed to confess Christ crucified." And so they make the Cross a Sacrament; for, by their own Definition of a Sacrament, it is made an "outward and visible Sign of inward and spiritual Grace." We want a Warrant from the Word of God for it, before we can use it in Faith. It smells of the Vessel whence it was drawn. And we wonder why this is not laid aside, as well as *Salt*, *Cream* and *Spittle*, still used in Baptism by the *Papists*.

2. By the Form of Baptism in the *Church of England*, Parents are not suffered to covenant with God for their own Children: But others must do it, tho' they be Strangers, and may never see the Child again: Nay, they must be other Persons, though the Parents were gracious, and the Godfathers and Godmothers

mothers were wicked; and so are more likely to neglect their Charge.

Obj. 9. *Godfathers and Godmothers were in Use under the Law, as Witnesses at Circumcision.*

Ans. Besides the Circumciser, there were two Persons made use of; a Woman, whose Work it was to carry the Child from the Mother to the Place of Circumcision, and back again to the Mother; and a Man to hold the Child in his Lap while it was circumcised; but neither of them promised any thing for the Child, as these now do.

3. The Godfathers and Godmothers are forced to promise what is in the Power of no Creature on Earth or in Heaven to perform, "That the Child shall renounce the Devil and all his Works, and constantly believe God's holy Word, and obediently keep all his Commandments, and walk in the same all the Days of his Life." And when all this is done, it is what the most of them never mind, either for themselves or the Child. Or, if they think of their Promises, how dare they put themselves in the Place of God; whose Work it is alone, to change the Heart and work Faith in it; and to *cause Men to walk in his Statutes, and keep his Commandments, and do them?* Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

4. We see no Reason to believe, that every Child baptized with Water, is also regenerated by the special Grace of God, as they express in their Order for Baptism, in these Words:

"We call upon thee for this Infant, that he, coming to thy holy Baptism, may receive Remission of Sins, by spiritual Regeneration."

The Word of God tells us, that Remission of Sins is only by the *Blood of Jesus Christ*, not by *Water-Baptism*, nor by *spiritual Regeneration*. So that there is a double Error in this Form, and they themselves have proved both of them ready to our Hands, in the Order for the Communion; where they have these Words:

“ In Remembrance of Christ’s meritorious Cross
“ and Passion, whereby, alone, we obtain Remission
“ of Sins, and are made Partakers of the Kingdom of
“ Heaven.”

5. In the Order for Baptism, they assert, “ that
“ it is clear, from the Word of God, that Children
“ baptized, and dying in their Infancy, before they
“ commit actual Sin, are undoubtedly saved.”

It is ~~not~~ clear to us; nor can they shew it in all the Word of God. But human Inventions commonly favour of human Infirmities-

REASON IV.

We cannot join with the *Church of England* in the Lord’s-Supper.

1. Because they order every one *to kneel* at their receiving it. It is the Custom of the *Papists* to do so; and their Reason is, because they believe that the Bread, after Consecration, is the very Body of *Christ*: But, if it be not so, it looks like Idolatry to kneel before it. But, because this was not the Custom of the Apostles, [but sitting, *Matt. xxvi. 20, 27.*] and because we are bid to abstain from all Appearance of Evil, therefore we reject it.

2. Be-

2. Because they order the Sacrament to be administered to the Sick; and permit it to be done to two or three Persons, when there is no Church present. Because this Ordinance should be administered only in the Church; and because this Custom springs from the same Ground with saying private Mass in Houses, and having no Warrant from the Word of God; therefore most of the reformed Churches rejected it, and therefore so do we.

3. Because Persons are allowed to come to that holy Ordinance, to qualify themselves for Places of Trust or Profit. This is a horrid profaning of a most sacred Ordinance, that was never designed to serve instead of a License.

4. Because they ordinarily admit any Person to that Ordinance that desires it. And more; for they order the Minister to invite all to it, that are present at hearing the Word, in this manner: "On such a Day we are to administer the holy Communion; unto which, in God's behalf, I bid you all here present." How this is done in God's behalf, we are at a loss, till we find a Warrant for it in the Word of God.

Are all that come to Church fit to go to the Table of the Lord? Whether they are or not, it seems, they must be all invited. It's manifest that many of them go thither, only for their Hire. And it's manifest that many of them are very unfit to go to that holy Ordinance.

1. Because they are destitute of saving Knowledge and Faith, and are Strangers to true Repentance and spiritual Regeneration. Be sure, such cannot discern
the

the Lord's Body; but must eat and drink unworthily, though they say they are in Charity with all Men.

2. Many of them live very wicked Lives; swear and be drunk the same Night, and oft in the Week.

To administer the holy Communion to such, is to cast that which is holy to Dogs; which we are expressly forbid to do. Where Matters are thus managed, it can hardly be truly said, "That the Sacraments are duly administered according to *Christ's* Appointment."

REASON V.

We dissent from the *Church of England*, because the generality of the Priests dissent from their old Doctrines and the chief of the thirty-nine Articles of Religion; as may be seen by comparing their preachings and Writings now, with the Writings of their old godly Ministers, in the Reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and 9th, 10th, 11th, 13th and 17th Articles of the *Church of England*, and with the nine Articles of *Lambeth*. Thus, they force us, either to dissent from them, or from the old Doctrines: We chuse to keep to the good old Way. And hence the *Church of England*, is beholden to us to keep their old Doctrines for them. Dr. Edward's Preacher.

REASON VI.

We except against two things, especially in the Order for the Burial for the Dead.

1. "They thank God for taking them away;" (bad as well as good): We dare not do this at the Burial.

Burial of many ; because we fear they die in their Sins, Strangers to *Christ*, true Faith, and real Holiness. As we have no Warrant for such an universal Form, so none but an Enemy, or a covetous Legatee, will heartily say, *Amen*.

2. Nor can we say, as they do, of every one, (even the vilest Wretches that they bury) that " We have " sure and certain Hope of their Resurrection to eternal Life : " For we verily think we should often speak against our Consciences, and the Persuasion of most that hear us. We believe the Doctrine of the Resurrection ; but do not believe that every one shall rise to eternal Life, *Dan. xii. 2*. Those that believe the Doctrine of Purgatory, have much more Colour of Reason for their use of this Form than we : For the *Papists* hold, that though a Person may not be fit for eternal Life when he dies ; yet he may be fitted for it after Death. This unscriptural Doctrine the *Church of England* denies ; and yet she teaches her Disciple, *That there is not one Soul goes to Hell*, that hath the Good-luck to have Christian Burial, (as they call it ; that is, to have the Order for the Burial of the Dead read over them). How inconsistent is this with their other Work.

REASON VII.

We withdraw from the Communion of the *Church of England*, because we cannot allow of such Officers in the Church, as Diocesan, or Lord Bishops. As they are Lords, we honour them as Officers of State, but not as Bishops in the Church.

We

We own all faithful Pastors of particular Congregations to be scriptural Bishops, and the Scriptures know no other. Our Lord *Jesus Christ* forbid it—*Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles, exercise Lordship over them; and their great ones exercise Authority upon them; but so it shall not be among you. But whosoever will be great among you, shall be your Minister; and whosoever among you will be the chiefest, shall be Servant of all, &c. Mark x. 42, 45.* And as the Scriptures know no such Office, so the first and purest Ages of Christianity know no such Office in the Churches.

Athanasius is said to be Bishop of *Alexandria*, (and a Bishop he was) but not a Diocesan Bishop; for he had no more Christians in his Community than might meet in one Place. We read of abundance of Bishops in the Histories of the Church, for above three hundred Years after *Christ*: But none of them could be Diocesan Bishops; because many of them were not above six, some five, some four, some three, and some but two Miles one from another. These were as near as our Parish-Ministers are one to another. But more than that, we read of two Bishops, in their Bishopricks, in the same City, at the same time; not setting up in Opposition one to another, but by the Consent of both, as well as of the People. Thus it was at *Jerusalem*, at *Antioch* and *Ephesus*; so that their Bishops were but Presbyters, Elders or Pastors of particular Congregations. Such Bishops we heartily own.

REASON VIII.

We cannot allow that the Bishop or Patron should impose a Pastor upon any Parish, without the Consent and Choice of the People: But are willing to use the Liberty which God hath given us; that is, for the People to chuse their own Pastor. “ The fullest Words that the *Greek* Authors use for all the Parts of Election; as, to propose, to name, to chuse, to decree, are (in Church-History) applied to the People; so that in the Primitive Church, the People did propose, name, elect and decree, as well as the Clergy; and though the Presbyters had more Skill to judge yet the People had as much right to chuse their own Pastors.”

Thus, a thousand Years after *Christ's* Ascension, the Council of *Nice* decreed, “ That if any Bishop decease, any other, reconciled to the Church, may be admitted, provided they be worthy, and the People do chuse them.” Should any one Man engross to himself, and his Heirs, the Power to impose upon every Woman in the Parish, such a Husband as he or they think fit, it would be counted an intolerable Imposition. We look on this Custom of imposing a Pastor upon a Church, without the Peoples Choice and Consent, to have a very near Resemblance to it.

REASON IX.

We dissent from the *Church of England*; because we think it wants *godly Discipline*: This (as to one particular Branch) the Church confesseth every Year; and this Confession hath been a Form to
 them.

them these hundred Years, without Alteration. It hardly looks like Sincerity, but there it stands unaltered ;

1. For a Witness against themselves, that have Power to alter it, and do not.

2. For the Justification of those who dissent from them, because it wants godly Discipline.

Some Discipline they have, but, if you will believe them, they want godly Discipline ; for all the Discipline they have, seems to be more to get Money, than to bring Sinners to Repentance.

If any Person commit a Fault that is worthy of Excommunication, it is not in the Power of any Parish-Minister, with all his Congregation, to excommunicate that Offender ; but this must be done by Lay-men ; though, I confess, it is done in the Bishop's Name ; yet these Lay-men do as they please. Of this Matter, a Bishop of their own faith :

“ The Church would be more secure, and more
“ unexceptionable, if the Administration of her
“ Discipline was put into other Hands, and in a
“ better Method.” Bishop *Burnet*.

There little Crimes are sometimes punished heavily, as not wearing of the Surplice ; and great ones come off lightly, or, it may be, are never enquired into, or are winked at ; as the Parson, or Curate's being drunk two or three times a Week, or swearing at every other Sentence ; it is as the Lay-men please. Whether, there, Money will answer all Things, we shall not enquire ;

quire ; but, be sure, it will answer the Place of Repentance ; for when the Money is paid, the Offender is again a good Church-Member.

If any Man, prosecuted in the Bishop's Court, gives any Signs of Repentance, why is he not restored to his Place without Money ? Why do they make a Gain of their Brother's Sins ? And if he does not give any Signs of Repentance, how come his Money to answer the Place of Repentance ?

If Money will admit Persons into the Communion of the *Church of England*, we hope it never shall into our Churches : If such an Offender should offer his Money to us on such an Account, we should think *St. Peter's Answer to Simon Magus* did in some sort belong to him—*Thy Money perish with thee ; because thou thoughtest the Gift of God might be purchased with Money ; thy Heart is not upright with God ; thou art in the Gall of Bitterness, and in the Bond of Iniquity.*

REASON X.

We leave the Communion of the *Church of England*, because it hath often shewn a persecuting Spirit in it. We never read that the Church of *Christ* did persecute others ; but *Jesus Christ* told his Disciples, they must expect it—*They that live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer Persecution.* This hath been just matter of Offence to us, that

Dissenters that live honestly, quietly, soberly and godly among them, have suffered much from the *Church of England* by Fines and Imprisonments, and have been hated, at the same Time that Swearers, Drunkards, &c. have been free from Trouble, and spoken kindly to, provided they did but own themselves to be of the *Church of England*.

Obj. *Dissenters may thank themselves for their own Stubbornness; for the Ceremonies are but indifferent things.*

Ans. Why then do they not leave them indifferent, *i. e.* whether Men will use them or not? Why do they make them Terms, not only of Communion, but of Salvation; for they tell us, "that Schism, on this Account, is a damning Sin, as much as Murder or Adultery." It is strange to us, how it should be as dangerous to break the Laws of Man, as it is to break the Laws of God. But this is a real Truth, that many warm Churchmen are more careful to avoid the Worship of *Dissenters*, than they are to avoid the Sins of Murder or Adultery. If they are *indifferent things* to them, why do they offend our Consciences, in thrusting them upon us, who cannot think them so. This is far from that Christian Spirit, 1 Cor. viii. 13. *I will eat no Flesh while the World standeth, lest I make my Brother to offend.*

That which Ministers deliver to the Churches, they must, first, receive of the Lord—I have

re-

received of the Lord, (that is, of the Lord Jesus Christ, not the Lord Bishop) that which I delivered unto you, 1 Cor. xi. 23.

Princes are very jealous of their sovereign Rights and Privileges; and we believe, the Lord Jesus Christ is so of His; and that whatsoever shew of Decency human Inventions may make to the Eyes of carnal Persons, such officious Intruders will, one Day, hear Him say, *Who hath required these things at your Hands?*

Especially, when, by such human Ceremonies, they keep many a Child of God out of the Church, though we, and they too, have an express Charge, not to have any thing to do with such Things—*Stand fast in the Liberty where-with Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the Yoke of Bondage, Gal. v. 1.*

If God hath taken off the Yoke of Jewish Ceremonies, he never intended that Men should invent new ones, which tend to Superstition.

We believe that a Serpent of Brass, when it hath the Stamp of God's Authority on it, is better than a golden Calf of Mens Invention; the one heals, the other hurts.



P A R T II.

Containing Six REASONS why Dissenters are not, nor can be guilty of Schism in peaceably separating from the Church of England.

THE Word *Schism* is used,

1. For Breach of Union in the Church: Thus those that abide in the Church, may be guilty of Schism, more than those that peaceably leave it; while they that remain in it, make Divisions and Parties, differing about Doctrines, &c. This is *Schism in the Body*, 1 Cor. xii. 25.

2. It is used for any causeless Separation from a Church; a peaceable Departure from any Church, is not Schism; or when there is just Cause for leaving its Communion.

But my present Business is to prove, that even, in the Sense of the Church, *Dissenters* are not guilty of Schism, notwithstanding their Noise about it.

REASON

REASON I.

The greatest Part of the Body of *Dissenters* now living, never were Members of the *Church of England*; they never broke off from it: and therefore are not guilty of Schism.

Obj. *But they were born in England, and the Church of England is a national Church.*

Ans. The Church of *Christ* was not so; for we read of seven Churches in the *Lesser Asia*, *Rev. i. 4.* And of the Churches of *Judea*, which was once a national Church, *Gal. i. 22.*

If our being born in *England* makes us Church-Members, then, in order to any one's Admission to the Lord's-Supper, it need not be asked, Have you Faith, &c. ? but, Where were you born ?

Obj. *But some of you gave your Consent to be Members of the Church of England.*

Ans. It is true; and so we were Members indeed; but, better understanding the Doctrines and Discipline of *Christ's Church* and Christian Liberty, we have made no unlawful Rent in the Church, but have peaceably joined ourselves to other Churches, where we are better satisfied, as *St. Paul*, (*Gal. i. 13, 14, 15, 16.*) by his own Example hath taught us.

REASON II.

If the Spirit of God is, in great measure, departed from any Church, then we may dissent from it, without being guilty of Schism; for Schism is a causeless Separation from any Church: But, if this be true, our Separation is not causeless.

Quest. *But how shall we judge of this matter?*

Ans^w. 1. If there be no Conversion-Work in the Church, then the Spirit of God is withdrawn from it. *Glorious things have been spoken of that City of God, that many have been born in her.* But now some of the best Ministers in the Church have confessed, that after forty Years Preaching in their Parish, they know not of one Soul converted in all that time. If there be no moving of the Waters, in vain do Souls look and wait for Healing at such a Pool.

If the generality, both of Ministers and People, hold no such Doctrine, and look for no such thing as spiritual Regeneration, or being born again, after Baptism (in Infancy) by the Spirit of God, through the Word: or, if most look on this Doctrine as *Presbyterian Cant*, we conclude, such are Strangers to any Experience of the thing; (for they are Strangers to the plain Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, *John* iii. 3, 5.) and that therefore we have sufficient Reason to attend on the Ministry, where the Truth is experienced, and
where

where Ministers can tell convinced Souls what they should do to be saved.

2. If there be little or no comforting Presence of the Spirit of God there, then our Separation is not causeless; and therefore it is not a Schism. Some have said, That a Bottle of Wine, or a Dose of proper Physic, or a Tune on the Organs, would do as much for dejected Souls, as *Dissenters* pretend to meet with, of Comfort, in their Worship; so little do many of them understand how it is that God manifests himself to his own, as he doth not to the World, *John* xiv. 22. Therefore we chuse to attend on the Ministry of such as have more spiritual Experience, who may be able to speak a Word in Season to our weary Souls.

REASON III.

If in any Church there be but little real Holiness, or but little of the Power of Religion and Godliness, or but little more than a Name to live, we may leave the Communion of any such Church, without being guilty of Schism.——

Having the Form of Godliness, but denying the Power thereof: from such turn away, 2 Tim. iii.

5. *Come out from among them, 2 Cor. vi. 17.*

In a large Parish, some of their own Members have confessed, “That they could not find five
“Persons in their Community, of whom they
“were persuaded they were Believers or real Chri-

“stians;”

"stians; such as shewed an Hatred of Sin, and
 "Love to Holiness." What Communion can a
 serious Christian have with such a Church.

If a Gardener grows more fond and careful
 of Weeds than he is of useful Plants and Herbs,
 it is high time to seek another Garden, or ano-
 ther Gardener.

If Ministers preach poorly, and Ministers and
 People generally live loosely, vainly, and pro-
 fanely, (like Atheists) for our Souls sake, we
 should go where there is better Preaching, and
 better Living, according to the glorious Gospel;
 and where the Form of Godliness doth not go
 without the Power; and where a misguided Zeal
 for little or indifferent things, does not eat out
 the Vitals of real Religion.

We can safely speak it to God, as well as
 to Men, this is one great End of our dissent-
 ing from the *Church of England*; after we had
 stayed in it twenty, some thirty, some forty
 Years.

REASON IV.

If any Church impose on its Members, ei-
 ther that which is really sinful, or is thought to
 be so; this will justify any Person, in his peace-
 able leaving the Communion of that Church.

This was the Ground of the *Church of En-
 gland's* Separation from the Church of Rome. Dr.
Hammond. And this is the Ground of *Dissenters*
 Sepa-

Separation from the *Church of England*. And their Practice is justified by that great Man, in the Communion of the *Church of England*, Dr. *Stillingfleet*, Iren. p. 199 his Words are these :

“ When a Church requires unnecessary Conditions of Communion ; then that Church must take on itself the Charge of Schism. Let Men turn and wind themselves which way they will ; by the very same Arguments, that any will prove Separation from the Church of *Rome* to be lawful, because she requires unlawful things, as Conditions of her Communion ; it will be proved lawful, not to conform to any suspected or unlawful Practice, required by any Church-Government, upon the same Terms, if the thing so required be, by a serious and sober Enquiry, judged unwarrantable, by a Man’s own Conscience.”

In another Place, the same Author hath these Words :

“ The Duties *Christ* required of his Disciples, were none but such as were necessary ; He that came to take away the insupportable Yoke of *Jewish* Ceremonies, certainly did never intend to gall the Necks of his Disciples with another instead of it. And it would be strange that the Church should require more than *Christ* himself did, and make other Conditions of her Communion than our Saviour did of Discipleship. What possible Reason can be given, why such things should not be sufficient for Communion

“ munion with a Church, which are sufficient for
 “ Salvation? Was there ever more true and cor-
 “ dial Love in the Churches, than in the times
 “ of the Apostles? And yet they made no such
 “ Terms of Communion. How will they answer
 “ it at the great Day, for keeping Men out of
 “ their Communion, by such things, as they
 “ call indifferent? Will the Lord *Jesus Christ*
 “ thank them for their Pretence of Decency and
 “ Order, when thereby they keep many out of
 “ their Church, whom the Lord *Jesus Christ* will
 “ admit into Heaven?” So far that learned Bi-
 “ shop.

The Charge of *Jesus Christ* to his Disciples is,
Go, teach them to observe all things, whatsoever I
have commanded you. And to such a Practice, and
 to no other, He hath affixed the Promise of his
 Presence with his Ministers, and his Churches—
Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the
World, Matt. xxviii. 20.

REASON V.

If any Church, by virtue of human Laws,
 without any Warrant from the Word of God,
 cast out of their Communion such as held no
 false Doctrines, nor were guilty of any evil Prac-
 tices, then that Church must take on itself the
 Charge of Schism.

This was the very Foundation of our Fathers
 dissenting from the *Church of England*, when in
 the

the Year 1662 ſhe (by the ſame Spirit with thoſe Men, *Dan. vi. 5.*) caſt out about two thouſand godly Miniſters, purely becauſe they could not ſin againſt *Chriſt* and their own Conſciences, in bringing into the Churches unneceſſary Ceremonies. And herein it plainly appears, that the Schiſm is juſtly chargeable on the Church, (not on them that were caſt out) becauſe that Act was made on purpoſe to caſt them out; for ſome of the Actors ſaid before that Day came, “ That “ they were afraid the *Preſbyterians* would continue in the Church.”

But, if they would not let theſe godly Miniſters preach in the Churches any longer, it is ſtrange they could think, that they would ſhut their Mouths, and obey them rather than God: For God had given them a Commiſſion to preach and had ſealed it, *1 Cor. ix. 2.* and no Command of Men could acquit them of their awful Charge: *Neceſſity is laid upon me, and woe unto me, if I preach not the Goſpel, 1 Cor. ix. 16.*

By theſe very Men God hath perſuaded many of our Fathers to turn from Sin to *Chriſt*; therefore they choſe rather to diſſent from the Church than from the Miniſtry of thoſe godly Men; and the rather, becauſe they ſaw that moſt of their Places, in the Churches, were very poorly filled up, (*viz.* by ignorant and ſcandalous Men). And as our Fathers followed theſe godly Men, in their Faith and Converſation; ſo, with paternal and Chriſtian Affection, they have charged many

many of us to follow them, in their Doctrines and holy Life.

Thus the *Church of England* hath, unjustly, driven us out; and then they uncharitably condemn us for Schism: It is plain that the Sin lies at their Door, and we must see some hopeful Signs of their Repentance, for that Sin, before they may expect us to return to their Communion.

REASON VI.

If such as leave the Communion of the Church have a lawful Dismission from the Church, they are not guilty of Schism.

This is the Case of all *Dissenters* in *England*, even of those that once were of the *Church of England*. This Dismission we have in the Act of Toleration, which is an Act of the King, who is owned by themselves to be the Head of the Church, over all Persons, and in all Causes, both ecclesiastical and civil. Therefore it is too bold and daring for Men, that call themselves *Loyalists*, and especially for passive Obedience Professors, to charge *Dissenters* with Schism, as long as that Act is in Force.



P A R T III.

*Some common OBJECTIONS, brought
by Churchmen against Dissenters, an-
swered.*

Obj. 1. **O**UR Church is of older standing than
yours.

Answ. And the Church of Rome is older than
yours; for we read that the Mystery of Iniquity
began to work in the Apostles Time, 2 *Thess.*
ii. 7. If there was any thing in this Argument,
you and we must both turn *Papists*. We are bid
to enquire after the good old Way, *Jer.* vi. 16. but
it must be good as well as old, else we must
not walk in it.

And yet if our dissenting Churches agree with
apostolical Doctrines, and Rules of divine Wor-
ship, and godly Discipline, better than yours,
then our Churches are truly older than yours.
To decide this matter, we are heartily willing
to stand the Trial of the Scriptures, and of the
Fathers, for the first three hundred Years after
the Ascension of *Christ*.

D

Obj.

Obj. 2. *The Church of England is established by Law, your Churches are not.*

Ans. And yet we do not cry out, "That our Church is in Danger;" for we know it is founded upon the Rock of Ages.—*Upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, Matt. xvi. 18.*

We conclude from hence, that the Church, which is often in Danger, cannot be the Church of *Christ*; or that Church which is built on *Christ* the Rock.

The Laws of our Land favour us more than the Laws did *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles; for thus they argue against *Christ*, *We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die*, John x. 7. Thanks be to God, our Churches are established by the Laws of Heaven: And yet as we hold to the most and best of the Thirty-nine Articles, which were established by Law, so our Doctrine, if not our Churches, are established by Law. But suppose they are not established by human Law, their Constitution is such that they don't need such Establishment, and that Church is in a poor Condition that does need it.

Obj. 3. *Our Places of Worship are holy, yours are not so.*

Ans. We know no Difference of Places, now since the Coming of *Jesus Christ*, John iv. 21. Yours are holy, only as they are set a-part for God's Worship, and so are ours.

But

But if your Places of divine Worship are holy, it's pity the Worshipers themselves are not more agreeable to their holy Places. The Place is nothing to us; for we had rather hear *Jesus Christ*, and the pure Word of God, preached in a thatched House, than a learned Oration in a stately Cathedral, where Faith in *Christ*, and the Necessity of the New-Birth, and the Power of the Spirit of God with the Word in order thereto, should be seldom heard of.

We can hear the Word, as the Disciples did *Jesus Christ*, on a Mountain, or out of a Ship, or in an House, or in a Barn. (God once chose a Threshing-Floor to raise the Temple from, *2 Chron. iii. 1.* and so he hath since raised many a Gospel-Church, from the pure and powerful preaching the Gospel in such a Place, separating the Chaff from the Wheat, and making his Word Bread of Life to Souls.)

If we can but hear of *Christ*, and his Salvation, we matter not in what Place; let it be at *Ephrata*, or the Fields of the Wood, *Pf. cxxxii. 6.* And so can others sometimes, when they please, out of a Market-Cross, or under a Tree, or in a Ship, or in the open Field, which are not holy in their own Sense.

Obj. 4. *Do you, Dissenters, think you are in the right, and all our learned Bishops and Doctors in the wrong? We have both the greatest Men, and the greatest Numbers on our Side.*

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Answer

Ans. We own it; and so had the Jews, in the Apostles Time; and so had the Papists at the Reformation—*The whole World wandered after the Beast, Rev. xiii. 3.* We wonder not to hear the old Cry, "Have any of the Rulers, " or of the Pharisees believed on him?" What if they do not, will it follow that we must not believe; it may be, they are not to be called effectually; for it is said, (1 Cor. i. 26.) *Ye see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many wise Men after the Flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: But the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised, that God might confound the wise and the mighty.* Little did the chief Priests, Scribes and Pharisees, with the Body of the Jewish Nation, think, that a few mean Dissenters from the national Worship were in the right, and all they in the wrong: They were so far from that Thought, that they counted them ignorant, deluded and cursed. *This People that know not the Law are cursed.* If Christ's Disciples were to go in the Way that the most, or the greatest go, they might have no Cross to take up, which Christ's Followers are sure to meet with.

When the Spirit of God would shew us how few they are that bear witness to the Truths of Christ, he calls them *two Witnesses*, Rev. xi. 9. to teach us, not to chuse our Religion by Multitudes, or reject Doctrines, because few believe them: for that may be the right Way which
few

few find, *Matt. viii. 13.* and fewer care to walk in, when they know it.

We think they have little Reason to boast of their Multitudes, but rather to blush for their vain Conversation; for Multitudes of graceless Professors, do but disgrace any Profession, and keep serious Christians out of their Communion.

Obj. 5. Dissenters want Unity in their Churches, they are of so many Opinions, that there is no end of them.

Ans. We could wish, it might be truly said of all that believe, among *Dissenters*, as was said of the primitive Christians, that the Multitude of them were all of one Heart, and one Soul, *Acts. iv. 32.* However, if a little after that, *St. Paul* and *Barnabas*, fall out, we shall not condemn their Doctrines, or be afraid of their Way: For it was the Way of God, though they stumbled in it.

And truly the Church have little more Reason to boast of Unity than we have: Witness the warm Disputes and Divisions in Convocation, and the wide Divisions of *High* and *Low-Church*; the Difference in Doctrines, and manner of reading the Prayers; some say all themselves, others make the Clerk say half the Prayers; some are for Organs and Anthems, others dislike them; some bow at the Name *Jesus*, others dislike it; some bow towards the East, other disapprove of the Practice (as *Heathenish*, or as one of *Exil's*

riel's Abominations, *Ezek. viii. 16.*) Some are for kneeling at Baptism, others in the Church will not submit to it; the most administer the Sacrament but three times a Year, others do it every Month, and some every Lord's Day. Some never read Prayers in the Church on Week-Days, others think they are bound to do it every Day, and others compound for *Wednesday* and *Friday*.

And the Worship in the Cathedral differs very much from that in the Parish-Churches.

The Mother hath her Singing-Men and Boys, by the Dozens in their Surplices; (this is all the Holiness that these Men have; as soon as they have done acting here, they are also Actors in the Play-Houses,) the Daughters content themselves with one Clerk a-piece, and allow him no Surplice; though, in truth, they need such an Emblem of Holiness as much as the others; for they are often Men of most wicked Lives. The Mother sings her Prayers, as if she was not in earnest; the Daughters read theirs, though formal enough.

Many of the *Church of England*, themselves, are even sick to see and hear Cathedral Decency and Order. "But if all the *Church of England* were of one Mind, God will one Day convince Men, That the Unity of the Church lies more in the Unity of Faith and Affection, than in the Uniformity of doubtful Rites and Ceremonies:" As saith their own Bishop *Stillingfleet*.

king fleet. Violent urging Uniformity in the Church hath been an Inlet to Superstition and the greatest Bar to Unity. We know that it hath been always attempted under specious Pretence of furthering Religion. But how ugly doth this Mask look when close viewed by wise Men; especially when they compare their Pretence with their Common Conversation.

Obj. 6. *The Church of England is more charitable than Dissenting Churches are.*

Ans. Let every one speak as they find, we know the Church hath shewn her Charity to some many Ways, as in her Forgiveness of Offences, though on the slightest hints of Sorrow; and in setting liberal yearly Incomes on very undeserving Persons, both Clergy and Laity; this made an old Doctor say, (while he was sweeping the Money into the Bag) "Well our Church is the best-constituted Church in the World."

Though some, whose Hearts are right with God, have higher Ends in joining with the Church, yet many cry up the Church, for no other End than the Craftsmen did *Diana*, lest their Gain should be lost. From such Money-Changers, the Church needs to be purged, as *Jesus Christ* did the Temple, with a Scourge of Cords.

None make so much Noise of the Church, as those that seldom come there, or, if they do, are the greatest Disgrace to it; such as have little to say for Religion, and who practise less than

than they know. Unless we allow these to be Acts of Religion :

1. Their drinking Healths to the Church, as if she was always in a fleshy Condition.
2. Their For-swearing themselves at Elections, under Pretence of upholding the Church. What, is the Church in such a poor Plight as to need the Forces of Hell to relieve it? But, O Shame! that any of the Clergy should do so! Well, it seems, *Dissenters* are uncharitable, and yet, I never heard of any one *Dissenter*, in my Life, that wished or drank the Damnation of the Church-Men: But have heard Parsons, as well as others, drink the *Dissenters* Damnation. (Cold Charity!) Neither is that any notable Piece of the Church's Charity, that will not part with a few indifferent Things, though it were to save the *Dissenters* from Damnation. Not to say anything of the heavy Fines and Imprisonments, whereby they have persecuted many thousands of godly *Dissenters* to their Graves, and their Families to extream Poverty.

If any, among us, transgress Gospel-Rules, we rebuke and exhort; and if they deserve it, we cast them out of the Church; and if they give Evidence of Repentance, we are ready to take them in again with Joy.

But, we cannot believe that a Man is sorry for his Sin of Drunkenness, when he continues to practise it; or that a Man is sorry for his Sins, on the Lord's-Day, that returns to them all

all the Week : We think we have no Warrant for such large Charity.

CONCLUSION.

If the *Church of England* would but remove these Causes of Offence, they should soon see that we and our People would return to their Communion, provided they desire it, (which we greatly question). But till then, we take the Liberty, by Law, allowed us ; that is, peaceably to withdraw ourselves from their Communion ; and therein to take up our Cross, and follow the Lord *Jesus Christ* ; being willing to submit to Poverty, Disgrace and Contempt, in the World, rather than sin against God and our Consciences ; and betray the Honour that is due alone to our Lord *Jesus Christ*, into the Hands of Men, with a Kiss and a Compliment of *Hail Master*. We do not disturb the *Church of England* in their Worship ; we do not call their Members to come to us ; or if any of our common Hearers go to the Church, and abide there, we do not invite them back. And if, after all this, they will condemn us, let us comfort ourselves, that God is with us, blessing our Ministry, for Sinners Conversion, and Believers Comfort and Growth in Grace.

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